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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 29 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) *(continued)*

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

1. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that the press release in English on the Committee's previous meeting gave a completely distorted picture of what had happened. Its highly tendentious headline constituted a foregone conclusion about what had actually occurred (the press release in French was much more objective). The question was not merely how press releases were written, but why, in the headline and the first two paragraphs, the author had chosen to record the words of petitioners hostile to Morocco, and not the words of another petitioner who was well disposed towards Morocco.

2. Did that mean that the writer of the press release felt personal animosity towards Morocco? According to Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, staff members of the Organization had to be objective, impartial, neutral and highly competent specialists. He had already drawn attention to the need for precise accounts of the Committee's work, and he now felt that a committee should be set up to determine the reasons why the author of the press release had chosen a title so provocative and inimical to Morocco. Morocco would be raising the question with the Secretary-General through official channels.

3. **The Chairman** said he would take the comments made by the representative of Morocco into account and would adopt the necessary measures.

4. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Cherif took a place at the petitioners' table.*

5. **Mr. Cherif** said that he had been born in 1954 near Laayoune in the Moroccan part of Western Sahara. In 1974 he had joined the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y del Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), in which he had initially served as a simple member of the security forces and had subsequently become a deputy commander. He had often participated in the Frente POLISARIO's punitive operations against opponents and in the unmasking of members preparing to betray the organization. As a former agent of the security forces, he could confirm the accusations made at national and international levels concerning human rights abuses by the Frente POLISARIO. Witness the torture, cold-blooded murder and disappearance of Saharans suspected of disloyalty to the Frente POLISARIO's dictatorial regime, the unrelenting surveillance in the Tindouf camps, with the help of agents planted by the security forces, of families and tribal representatives who were punished for the slightest deviation from the rule laid down by the Frente POLISARIO's leadership, and the repression of women in the camps, who were disciplined together with their families for disobedience to camp commanders. In consequence, he asked the international human rights organizations to carry out a thorough investigation of the human rights situation in the Tindouf camps. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must accelerate the repatriation from the Tindouf camps of refugees who were being held against their will in the desert of southern Algeria. Special attention must be given to the situation of the POLISARIO sheikhs serving on the Identification Commission. They were being forced by the security forces to carry out the instructions of the Frente POLISARIO to reject all candidates put forward by Morocco under the fourth and fifth criteria for identification, even those from their own tribe. Tens of thousands of applicants had been rejected in that way. In conclusion, he pointed out that humanitarian aid was being appropriated by Frente POLISARIO officials and sold in the markets of Mauritania and Morocco. He gave the Committee a list of victims of the torture and repression of the Frente POLISARIO.

6. **Mr. Nkazengany** (Gabon) asked the petitioner to clarify his statement that the Frente POLISARIO's leaders were forcing the sheikhs to reject applicants from Morocco that it considered unsuitable.

7. **Mr. Cherif** said that the Frente POLISARIO had set up administrative machinery for coordinating actions in connection with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). In May 1993 there had been a meeting of heads of security forces in which members had been given two lists. On the first were names of persons that the POLISARIO sheikhs were to designate as Saharans within the context of the decolonization process. The second contained persons who should not be allowed to participate in the referendum, as they intended to vote

for reunification with Morocco. Members of the security forces had been told to serve as inspectors to ensure that the sheikhs carried out instructions. The current representative of the Frente POLISARIO in New York, Mr. Ahmed Boukhari, had been one of the participants in the meeting.

8. **The Chairman** asked the petitioner to wind up his statement.

9. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco), speaking on a point of order, said that since the petitioner had been given the floor, it would be only right and proper to let him finish his statement with no time restrictions. It would be all the more appropriate in that statements made by other petitioners had not been subjected to time limits.

10. **Mr. Belaoura** (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, said that petitioners were entitled to a total of 10 minutes' speaking time and must be concise in their answers to questions from delegations. He called on the Chairman to ensure that in giving their answers, petitioners did not exceed the established time limit, which was one of the reasons why by the end of the week, the Committee had not had enough time for the adoption of the various resolutions and decisions on its agenda. The petitioner should give brief and concise answers and not exceed the established time limit, which was 10 minutes.

11. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco), speaking on a point of order, insisted that the petitioner should have the opportunity to answer in detail the questions asked by members of the Committee, with no time limitations. If the representative of Algeria did not wish to hear those explanations, he could leave the room, so that other delegations might have the benefit of the information brought to the Committee by the petitioner.

12. **The Chairman** recalled that the ten-minute time limit concerned only the original statement by the petitioner, not answers to questions. He called on the petitioner, nevertheless, to answer questions briefly and concisely and, in so doing, not to exceed five minutes.

13. **Mr. Camara** (Guinea) asked for clarification of the information on the number of Saharan refugees living in the Tindouf camps. Two figures had been given yesterday in the Committee, 200,000 and 35,000.

14. **Mr. Cherif** said that the question of the size of the camp populations had first come up in 1976, and that the figures given at that time had been ten times higher than the actual number of refugees. Members of the security forces had been invited to fabricate thousands of names. The Frente POLISARIO was pursuing political goals and seeking to attract international humanitarian assistance, which was then used for fraudulent purposes. The figures given by the petitioner from Spain did not fit with the facts. Such distorted information suited the interests of the Frente POLISARIO. The real number of refugees, according to data collected through the identification process being carried out by the United Nations, was 44,000 to 46,000.

15. **Mr. Tall** (Senegal) asked whether the petitioner had any precise data on individuals who had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment or who had disappeared in the Tindouf camps. He would also like to know the purpose for which such practices, if they existed, were used by the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO.

16. **Mr. Cherif** said that hundreds of people had been victims of the torture and genocide practised by mercenaries of the Frente POLISARIO. Human rights violations were committed in the presence of leaders of the Frente POLISARIO and of certain Algerian colonels.

17. **Mr. Belaoura** (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, said that he had given the petitioner a chance to make his statement, but that did not give him the right to criticize and attack a sovereign State, especially Algeria, which had always upheld the right of peoples to self-determination. He demanded that the petitioner observe the established rules.

18. **The Chairman** asked the petitioner to refrain from attacking Member States.

19. **Mr. Cherif**, continuing with his reply to the question, said that human rights violations had taken place in a number of places of detention. Members of the Frente POLISARIO inflicted torture on women, whipped, burned and mutilated them. He listed the individuals responsible. They had killed hundreds of innocent persons who had proudly proclaimed their allegiance to Morocco.

20. **Mr. Belaoura** (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, objected to the fact that the petitioner had exceeded his time limit and was repeating information that he had already given in his statement. He asked the Chairman to ensure that the rules of procedure were observed.

21. **The Chairman** said that the petitioner was answering questions asked by participants in the meeting.

22. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that the petitioner, who had answered three questions, had frequently been interrupted.

23. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) asked the petitioner what were the countries of origin of the mercenaries he had frequently mentioned and who paid them.

24. **Mr. Cherif** said that people from various countries, including Mali and Mauritania, had been hired by the Frente POLISARIO in the 1980s and later years and were now in the Tindouf camps.

25. *Mr. Cherif withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Thobhani (Metropolitan State College, Denver) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Mr. Thobhani** (Metropolitan State College, Denver) said that as part of his study of Western Sahara, during the past year he had spent over two months in the Territory. His visit had been approved by the Government of Morocco, and he expressed thanks to that Government and to the people of the Territory for its warm hospitality. The primary focus of his research, which was still in progress, was to study the social, economic and political transformation of Western Sahara since 1975, when the Kingdom of Morocco had taken control of the Territory. During his stay in Western Sahara, he had visited the major towns and their environs. A network of roads linked those towns, and regular passenger bus service was provided.

28. During his stay in Western Sahara, he had met with a wide range of people: government officials, private citizens, people whose families had resided in the Territory for generations, people who had fled the Territory in the 1950s and had now returned, settlers from many parts of Morocco, refugees returned from the Tindouf camps and people associated with MINURSO. In addition, he had visited scores of socio-economic projects: schools, health care facilities, factories, markets, cultural centres, ports, agricultural projects, desalination plants, livestock and poultry farms, electric power stations, chambers of commerce, job training centres, housing complexes, non-governmental organizations and homes of citizens. He could say definitively, on the basis of his observations, that the transformation in the Territory over the past quarter of a century was of historic proportions and immense in scope. The enormous effort and resources expended by the Government of Morocco had yielded considerable improvement in the lives of the people. The population of the Territory was now four times larger than in 1975 and the majority, approximately 95 per cent, lived in urban areas. There were currently 50,000 to 60,000 households in the Territory. Laayoune, with a population of 175,000 to 200,000, was one of the largest metropolitan areas in the Sahara desert. Remarkable were the level of integration of the Territory with the rest of Morocco and the sense of loyalty to that country on the part of many of the indigenous inhabitants.

29. Improvements in the quality of life of the people had been effected through a massive programme of development of health, educational and housing infrastructure. For instance, nearly 41,000 students had been enrolled in the city and region of Laayoune during the 1999-2000 academic year and enrolment in other regions had likewise been strong. The people hoped that a university would soon be built in the area. Thousands of housing units had been constructed and provided to the inhabitants at little or no cost. Scores of health centres had been established throughout the Territory and each urban centre had at least one hospital facility. Major progress had been made in providing water and electricity to the inhabitants. Urban commerce was flourishing and certain commodities were subsidized by the Government, as was the case throughout the Kingdom. The major employers were governmental administration, the mining sector and the fishing industry. Surprising achievements had been made in agricultural projects such as banana plantation and tomato and melon farming in the desert. New dairy and poultry farms were being set up and local production now satisfied nearly one third of local needs for milk, eggs and poultry meat. A communications infrastructure – telephone service, postal network, mobile phone usage and satellite television service – had been established.

30. Nevertheless, a number of critical socio-economic problems were evident. Firstly, each town had slum areas in which resided hundreds of people. The authorities had plans to relocate the residents to healthier, more suitable areas, but those plans were moving forward rather slowly. Second, with the tremendous population growth that had occurred, the

employment situation had become more critical. Lack of employment opportunities was giving rise to frustration, especially among younger people. The problem was not unique to the region, however: it affected the entire nation. Third, environmental pollution was having a negative impact on the population's quality of life. One of the greatest tragedies of the situation was the separation of families that had prevailed for a quarter of a century. He called on the United Nations to explore all peaceful options to resolve the impasse.

31. Turning to human rights, he said he had observed that the population was free to move about by either private or public means of transportation. Within each town, people felt a sense of safety, although in Laayoune, following the disturbances of October 1999, the presence of the security forces had been increased. In the past several months, inhabitants of the Territory had felt a new wind, the result of numerous positive changes instituted by King Mohammed VI and his Government, and people felt freer to realize their democratic rights.

32. **Mr. Belaoura** (Algeria) said that he was not asking a question, but merely wished to point out that the petitioner's research had been financed by the Government of Morocco.

33. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said he would like to hear the petitioner's reply to that provocative statement by the representative of Algeria.

34. **Mr. Thobhani** (Metropolitan State College, Denver) explained that his research had been financed by his university.

35. **Mr. Belaoura** (Algeria) said that he had not asked the petitioner a question but had merely made a remark, which had drawn a strong reaction from the representative of Morocco.

36. *Mr. Thobhani withdrew.*

37. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that the representative of Algeria, through his provocative comments, had cast aspersions both on the petitioner and on the Kingdom of Morocco. That was why he had asked for the petitioner's explanation.

38. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wamytan (Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak Socialiste (FLNKS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

39. **Mr. Wamytan** (President, FLNKS) said that the year 1998 had been a turning point in the political history of New Caledonia, with the signature on 5 May of the Noumea Accord between the Government of the Territory and the Government of France, under which they had agreed to seek a negotiated solution for the creation of a new institutional framework. Nearly 72 per cent of the population had voted in the referendum on the Noumea Accord held on 8 November 1998, thereby demonstrating a readiness to determine its future independently. Since 1986, when New Caledonia had been included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the FLNKS, the legitimate spokesman for the aspirations of the Kanaks, the Territory's indigenous population, had been defending the legitimate rights of the Kanaks that had been recognized by the United Nations. That was why its participation in the Committee's important work was essential. New Caledonia was rich in natural resources, including nickel and cobalt. The people of the Territory must be given the opportunity for constructive involvement in economic activity, including mineral mining. One possible step in that direction was the creation of the Société Caledonnienne de Participation Industrielle.

40. Serious problems arose, however, in the implementation of the Noumea Accord. Although the goals of the Accord were clearly formulated, namely the creation of new political structures and the gradual preparation of the Territory for full sovereignty, the Rassemblement pour la Caledonie dans la Republique (RPCR) had broken with the principle of collegiality and the agreement on power sharing. That aroused anxiety in the population of the Territory and its representatives, who considered that the Noumea Accord gave the parties peaceful means of solving problems and of avoiding clashes between representatives of various ethnic communities. Despite that difficult situation, the FLNKS had not lost hope of finding a solution to the problems barring the achievement of the Accord and the restoration of sovereignty to the Territory's population, the Kanaks. The French Government, for its part, was not only an intermediary but a major participant in the Noumea Accord and should work for the renewal of dialogue between the FLNKS and the RPCR and the furthering of the process begun with the signing of the Noumea Accord.

41. In conclusion, he confirmed his organization's readiness to comply with the Accord and called on the United Nations to focus its attention on the liberation of New Caledonia from colonial dependence with a view to the realization by the people of that Territory of its inalienable right to self-determination.

42. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea) recalled that he had submitted the report of the visiting mission to New Caledonia (A/54/921) and drew attention to paragraph 33 thereof, which referred, inter alia, to the fulfilment of the constitutional process in accordance with the Noumea Accord. He asked Mr. Wamytan about the likelihood that the French National Assembly and Senate would ratify the relevant amendments to the French Constitution.

43. **Mr. Wamytan** (President, FLNKS) said the only question that remained to be resolved by the French National Assembly and Senate was that of amendments to the Constitution that would diminish the electorate for provincial administrative organs in New Caledonia. Although agreement had been reached on the subject during political negotiations, the Constitutional Council had found the amendments to be unconstitutional. That was why the matter would again be subjected to scrutiny, most likely in early 2001.

44. **Mr. Carrel-Billiard** (France) confirmed that the amendments to the criteria for formation of the electorate had been adopted by the French National Assembly and Senate and were now awaiting ratification at a joint session of the two bodies.

45. *Mr. Wamytan withdrew.*

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) *(continued)* (A/55/23 (Part II), chapters VI, IX-XI, A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (D-F, H), A/55/303, A/55/384-S/2000/870; A/AC.109/2000/2-10, A/AC.109/2000/13-18; A/C.4/55/L.3)

Agenda item 88: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations *(continued)* (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter VIII, A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (A), A/55/77 and Add.1)

Agenda item 89: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories *(continued)* (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter V, A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (B))

Agenda item 90: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations *(continued)* (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter VII, A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (C), A/55/72 and Corr.1; A/C.4/55/CRP.1; E/2000/68)

Agenda item 91: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories *(continued)* (A/55/81 and Add.1)

General debate

46. **Ms. Cortes** (Spain), having noted with satisfaction the proposal to declare the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, turned to a question of great concern to her country: the United Kingdom's occupation of Gibraltar, a part of Spanish territory. The Spanish Government's position on the matter was well known to members of the Fourth Committee and had been reaffirmed by the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs in the General Assembly: Gibraltar was a colony to which the process of decolonization applied. The decolonization of Gibraltar must be carried out in accordance with the principle of territorial integrity, as envisaged in a number of United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970. Spain would not renounce its right to the restoration of its sovereignty over Gibraltar.

47. To date, the negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom had yielded no significant results. Unfortunately, the United Kingdom continued to refuse to cooperate with Spain with a view to resolving the situation, despite the commitments it had made within the framework of the Brussels Declaration and the relevant decisions adopted year after year by the General Assembly. It was not a matter of sovereignty alone but was also about the transformation of Gibraltar into a tax haven as a result of measures taken by the administering Powers which had a negative impact on Spanish market performance and impoverished the populations of contiguous territories.

The operations of the British military base on Gibraltar impinged on Spain's legitimate security interests and in particular on the interests of nearly 300,000 inhabitants of regions adjacent to the colony.

48. **Mr. Teo** (Singapore) said that the Committee must press on with its activities aimed at facilitating the enjoyment by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the right to self-determination. From its own experience, Singapore knew that the passage towards independence was complex and daunting. It had been the beneficiary of assistance from both developed and developing countries and from international organizations. It was now in a position to assist others and organized a great many training courses and study programmes, primarily in the fields of finance, trade, economics and information technology, in which people from many developing countries and Non-Self-Governing Territories participated. On the eve of the new millennium, the Committee should redouble its efforts to put an end to colonialism and ensure a smooth transition to independence for Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that regard, Singapore continued to support General Assembly resolution 845 (IX) of 22 November 1954 and it contributed to the development of human resources in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to catalyse stable economic growth.

49. **Mr. Hafiana** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said his country attached special importance to the topics under discussion and advocated the independence of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation had a high regard for the efforts made by the Special Committee in the area of decolonization and wished to express gratitude for the report on its work (A/55/23). The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya hoped that economic aid and grants would be accorded to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in line with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for the purpose of eradicating poverty, creating employment opportunities, protecting the environment and ensuring rational use of resources. The small Non-Self-Governing Territories must be given the chance to participate in meetings, seminars and conferences, as well as in the conferences of the specialized agencies. Visiting missions should be sent to those Territories to assess the situation on the spot and to ascertain the hopes and interests of inhabitants of the Territories.

50. Unfortunately, the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had not been a success. Many Non-Self-Governing Territories had not yet been able to achieve their dream of freedom, self-determination and independence. His country hoped that the Special Committee would adopt measures to implement the relevant resolutions and to enable the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to dispose of their domestic resources and control the process of economic development. They had the right to self-determination and freely to decide their future status. In that regard, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the idea of proclaiming a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and called on the United Nations to exert efforts to implement all the resolutions relating to the eradication of colonialism and colonial rule. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be allowed to elect their Governments through the expression of their own will. Governments and international and regional organizations should be urged to assist the small island States. The United Nations Development Fund must be called upon to investigate ways of ensuring food security and building an industrial base in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. At the same time, the provision to those Territories of assistance that was not in line with the interests of the resident peoples should be avoided.

51. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that they had a special interest in the agenda items relating to the small island Territories, and particularly to the seven Territories in the Caribbean, since they regarded them as integral parts of the region. Montserrat was a full member of CARICOM, while the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Anguilla were associate members. The United States Virgin Islands had long expressed an interest in being associated with CARICOM. Most of those Territories were members of the Caribbean Development Bank and of other Caribbean institutions, and CARICOM regarded their political, economic and social development as critical to the sustainable development of the region as a whole.

52. The successful decolonization of over 80 Territories since the Second World War was a testament to the commitment of the United Nations to ensuring that peoples in those Territories attained self-government. Many of the Territories in the Caribbean region had acceded to independence through free association and full integration with independent States

in accordance with the principles laid down in the General Assembly's landmark resolution 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960. CARICOM reiterated its full support of those principles but also recognized the need to remain flexible in crafting solutions to the dilemma of dependency facing the Territories.

53. Many of those issues had been addressed during the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism at regional seminars held in the Caribbean and the Pacific, where representatives of Governments of the Territories, non-governmental organizations and regional experts had been given the opportunity to express their views and deliver papers, thus providing the Special Committee with a better insight into the concerns of the peoples of the Territories themselves regarding their future self-determination. The reports on those regional seminars contained recommendations on some of the issues that should be addressed by the General Assembly. The most recent of the recommendations had been made at the Pacific Regional Seminar, held at Majuro, Marshall Islands, in May 2000. The importance of continuing to hold such regional seminars could not be overemphasized.

54. While the regional seminars provided information on the realities on the ground, it was important to note that the implementation of the other elements of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had been less than desirable. Major activities had not been carried out, including the creation of political education programmes, visits to each of the Territories by the Secretary-General or his Special Representative and implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The critical analysis of the constitutional, political and economic development of the Territories, which was vital to the full assessment of prevailing conditions there, had likewise not been carried out, despite the clear mandate in the Plan of Action. The failure to complete those tasks had reportedly been due to the insufficient human and financial resources available to the Special Committee. Lacking key research studies, however, Member States could not make the decisions that would affect the future constitutional status of the small island Territories. CARICOM requested the General Assembly to direct the Special Committee to utilize regional experts to carry out that important research.

55. The CARICOM Member States attached great importance to the participation in the Special Committee of elected representatives of the Governments of Non-Self-Governing Territories. But although those Territories were allowed to participate as observers in other General Assembly forums, such as special sessions and world conferences, they were not given the same status in meetings of the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee. The CARICOM countries urged those bodies to recognize the status of such elected Government officials so that their participation in future meetings could be enhanced.

56. Addressing the issue of Western Sahara, he noted that although the General Assembly had endorsed the settlement plan which called for the holding of a referendum, nine years later that referendum had still not taken place. The Member States of CARICOM believed that the settlement plan represented the best option for resolving the issue, looked forward to the outcome of the talks between the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III, and the representatives of the countries concerned, and hoped that an early solution could be achieved.

57. At the recent Millennium Summit, the General Assembly had adopted the Millennium Declaration which had reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the principle of self-determination. In that connection, the CARICOM countries recalled that in meetings of the Fourth Committee and at regional seminars, representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had called on the international community to regard the decolonization era not as being finished, but rather as an ongoing process requiring unique remedies to protect the inalienable rights of the peoples of the Territories, and in particular of the small island Territories.

58. **Mr. Valdes** (Chile) said he endorsed the statement by the Colombian delegation on behalf of the Rio Group and wished to touch on a number of issues relating to certain Non-Self-Governing Territories. He recalled that an historic event had occurred with the holding of a nationwide referendum in East Timor but expressed great concern about the wave of violence that had swept over the Territory after the results of the referendum had been announced. Chile, which was taking an active part in the work of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, was closely following the unfolding of events in that Territory. Regarding Western Sahara, his delegation reiterated its desire to see the early holding of a referendum in the Territory and called on the parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General in carrying out the settlement plan. Chile was following with interest the events in New Caledonia after the signature of the Noumea Accord. As for the issue of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), his

delegation fully supported the statement by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the States members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the associated States.

59. Established in 1961, the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had worked actively on the process of decolonization, and from 1962 to 1984, 42 of the 67 Territories included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories had acceded to independence. Apart from East Timor, the last time a Territory had attained independence had been in 1984, despite the fact that the General Assembly had proclaimed the period 1990-2000 the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In 1998, the Special Committee had decided to carry out a critical review of its work and had held informal consultations with the administering Powers. In July 1999, its members had agreed on a conceptual framework for a review of the constitutional and legal status of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on the basis of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and in March 2000, the Committee had finalized its programme of work, which was to serve as the basis for the consideration of the problems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis. The programme of work had been well received by representatives of the administering Powers and of some Non-Self-Governing Territories.

60. **Mr. Zayani** (Bahrain) noted that the progress made by the United Nations in the field of decolonization was founded on the implementation of the principle of self-determination and the right of peoples to independence, freedom and equality. The United Nations, and specifically the Special Committee, had something to be proud of at the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in that, resolutely applying the Charter, the Organization had been exerting every effort to fulfil the aspirations of colonial peoples and to free them from the yoke of colonialism, which had impeded their socio-economic development and equitable international cooperation. In the 40 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the United Nations had exerted untiring efforts to realize fully the aims set out in that instrument and in subsequent documents and resolutions. The right of peoples to liberation from colonial domination was a human right. In the Declaration adopted at the Millennium Assembly, the heads of State and Government had reaffirmed their support for all efforts to uphold the right to self-determination of peoples which remained under colonial domination and foreign occupation. It could therefore be hoped that the ultimate goal – the elimination of colonialism – would be achieved during the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

61. **Mr. Simamora** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that in beginning the new millennium, it was fitting to recall that one of the major achievements of the United Nations was the fulfilment of its important role in the field of decolonization. Since a few Non-Self-Governing Territories still existed, however, the task had not yet been completed. What was important was that the people of those Territories should be able freely to express their political aspirations on the basis of the principles contained in the relevant United Nations resolutions. Past history indicated that each case of decolonization was subject to specific historical circumstances and prevailing realities and required unique approaches to solving real problems. In that regard, ASEAN supported the recommendations of the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cartagena from 8 to 9 April 2000, including the proposal for a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

62. In the light of the fact that lasting peace, independence and freedom were inextricably linked to social and economic development, there was a need to consider the unique circumstances prevailing in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, such as vulnerability to natural disasters, fragility of ecosystems, geographical isolation and the need to protect the cultural traditions of local populations. In the past decade, such matters had been the focus of a number of international instruments, including the Barbados Programme of Action. Six years later, however, a lack of adequate resources was making it difficult to carry out the corresponding tasks, especially in capacity building, institution building and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. To achieve success there was need for integrated planning and cooperation between the Special Committee, United Nations agencies, the administering Powers and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was ultimately international cooperation and equitable partnership that formed the basis for the political and sustainable development of those Territories.

63. ASEAN supported the holding of annual regional seminars, which offered a useful forum for ascertaining the views of all the parties concerned and provided a

basis for devising appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of the decolonization process. Also necessary was close contact between the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council with a view to formulating appropriate programmes of assistance to expedite the economic and social progress of colonial peoples. It was equally important to strengthen the information component so that their representatives could have easy access to such activities and programmes. ASEAN pledged its full cooperation to the implementation of the proposed Plan of Action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

64. **Mr. Naidu** (Fiji) said that a good number of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Pacific, and there was often no consensus on their dreams of identity. Notwithstanding the divergent positions, Fiji remained fully confident that good neighbourliness and constructive dialogue would prevail in relations among member nations. In order for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to realize their right to self-determination, the Special Committee had been tirelessly carrying out various activities, including regional seminars and visiting missions. Its goal would not be reached, however, without the good will of the administering Powers, with which the Special Committee had succeeded in establishing congenial relations. His delegation applauded the role of New Zealand in helping the people of Tokelau to decide its political future for itself. It congratulated France and New Caledonia for the progress in implementing the Noumea Accord in a spirit of mutual trust and understanding.

65. Fiji reiterated its view that the peoples of the Territories themselves should decide on their political status, and it believed that a fair approach would be the holding of a referendum. The international community must remember what had happened in East Timor after the referendum, however, and be prepared to prevent a repetition of such events. Most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were small island nations which experienced particular economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Accession to independence could have disastrous consequences for their peoples unless it was preceded by concerted efforts to develop human resources and to put in place viable economic foundations. The responsibility for ensuring their sustainable development lay with the administering Powers.

66. **Ms. Naidoo** (South Africa) said that her country, whose struggle had been addressed not long ago by the Committee itself, called on all Member States actively to support the proposal for a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and to recommit themselves to the effective implementation of the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination and independence. South Africa supported the aspirations of the Saharan people and commended the parties to the Houston agreements for their efforts to implement the settlement plan. Her delegation considered that the time had come to hold a free and fair referendum that would resolve the painful issue that had been confronting the Saharan and Moroccan peoples for many years. Whatever the decision adopted by the Saharan people in the referendum, it was their prerogative, and their right to make that decision remained inalienable.

67. **Mr. Blanco** (Venezuela) said his country endorsed the statement made by the Colombian delegation on behalf of the Rio Group and shared the concerns about the fact that it had not proved possible to achieve all the goals of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The administering Powers bore a special responsibility, and cooperation with the Special Committee in reviewing the situation in each of the Territories under their administration was of critical importance. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation considered that the international community should continue to provide assistance as part of the negotiations under United Nations auspices, but that it was also essential to ensure that neither the radicalization nor the indifference of those responsible for seeking solutions satisfactory to both parties blocked agreement on the referendum. Venezuela advocated the holding of a free and fair referendum as soon as possible, and in that regard called on the parties to redouble their efforts at the upcoming meeting to be mediated by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III.

68. His delegation welcomed the holding of the referendum in East Timor, in which the East Timorese people had opted for independence, and the fact that democratic elections would be held there in the near future. Venezuela expressed its condolences regarding the attack on the refugee camp in West Timor in which three officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had been killed.

69. Venezuela shared the aspirations of the Argentine Republic concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). In that regard, it called on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to

undertake negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute.

70. **Mr. Liswaniso** (Namibia) said that during the Security Council's meetings on the question of Western Sahara, Namibia had made clear its position that the United Nations settlement plan remained the only viable mechanism for peaceful solution of the conflict. It was the only mechanism through which the people of Western Sahara could exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. His delegation was discouraged by the recent reports by the Secretary-General which seemed to depart from and question the implementation of the settlement plan. Namibia could not support any arrangements outside the United Nations settlement plan that were aimed at impeding the realization of the Saharan people's wishes for independence. It urged the international community not to abandon the people of Western Sahara at that critical stage, but rather to intensify its support for its just cause under the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO. With regard to the repatriation of refugees as provided for in the settlement plan, his delegation commended UNHCR for ascertaining the desire for repatriation of the refugees. Namibia welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Africa and particularly in Western Sahara. It also commended the work of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III, who had brought the parties together in London and Geneva in 2000 with a view to finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the current impasse.

71. **Mr. Inacio, Jr.** (Mozambique) said that although progress had been made in the implementation of the main United Nations resolutions on decolonization, the process was far from finished, given that 17 Territories were still under colonial domination. Mozambique was encouraged by the continuing constructive dialogue between the Special Committee and the administering Powers aimed at the exercise by the populations of the Territories of political, economic and social self-determination. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara and the efforts made by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III, in holding consultations in the region. The people of Western Sahara must be given an opportunity to decide its future through a free and fair referendum under United Nations auspices. That was the right way, the way that could lead to a lasting solution to the issue and open up a new era of peace and stability in the region.

72. **Ms. Bamber** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said she wished to respond to the comments about the sovereignty of Gibraltar in the statement by the representative of Spain. The position of the United Kingdom on the question was well known and had been clearly delineated by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom at the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 14 September 2000. Regarding the comments on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) made by the representatives of Chile and Venezuela, she said the position of the United Kingdom on that issue, too, was well known and had been clearly delineated by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom in the plenary Assembly of 21 September 2000.

73. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Namibia, a member of the Security Council, had accused the Moroccan authorities of resorting to severe repression in Western Sahara. Members of the Security Council should be well aware of the presence of MINURSO in Western Sahara, and they should be conversant with the reports on the situation in that region. Petitioners made mistakes, but it was unacceptable that a Member State should allow itself to make one. The Moroccan delegation had often stated in the general debate that the question of Western Sahara was not a decolonization problem. It was making every possible effort to cooperate with the United Nations.

74. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should take action on draft resolutions and decisions at its meeting on Tuesday, 3 October 2000, at 10 a.m., in Conference Room 1.

75. **Mr. Mesdoua** (Algeria) proposed that the current meeting should be extended by 15 minutes so that the Committee could complete its consideration of the non-controversial texts, in particular, the draft resolution put forward by the Chairman.

76. **The Chairman**, addressing the representative of Algeria, said that he had put forward a draft resolution on the understanding that it would be adopted by consensus, but that a proposal had been made to complete work on it in the following week. The next meeting would be held on 3 October 2000, at 10 a.m., in Conference Room 1.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.